

State of California

## Department of Corporations

*“California’s Investment and Financing Authority”*

*Securities • Franchises • Off-Exchange Commodities  
Investment and Financial Services • Independent Escrows Consumer &  
Commercial Finance Lending • Payday Loans  
Residential Mortgage Lending • Enforcement  
Education & Outreach*

The Department of Corporations is California’s Investment and Financing Authority. The Department protects California consumers by licensing and regulating individuals and companies that offer securities, investment advice, consumer finance loans, residential mortgage loans, escrows, payday loans, franchises, and certain bill-paying services. Through its enforcement activities, the Department prevents businesses and individuals from conducting unlicensed or fraudulent consumer transactions.

The Department of Corporations works collaboratively with other California State agencies (including Departments of Financial Institutions, Real Estate, Insurance, and Consumer Affairs); federal agencies (including Securities and Exchange Commission, Federal Trade Commission, Department of Defense, and U.S. Department of Justice); local agencies (including Adult Protective Services, law enforcement, and District and City Attorneys); and many other organizations.

### Mission Statement

- Ensure an efficient and accessible financial services marketplace in California,
- Educate the public about the risks and rewards in investing and finances, and
- Enforce California’s financial services laws to protect the public from fraud.

The Department of Corporations is one of thirteen State agencies overseen by the California Business, Transportation, and Housing Agency.

## Who We License

The California Department of Corporations licenses and regulates over 300,000 entities and individuals involved in investment and financial services, representing a significant portion of California's economy. Pursuant to California's Corporations Code and Financial Code, the Department licenses and/or regulates:

- The offer and sale of investments (stocks and bonds), franchises, and certain commodity transactions
- Stock-brokers and investment advisors, including financial planners offering investment advice
- Finance companies that offer consumer and/or commercial loans, and the resulting loans
- Residential mortgage lenders (also called mortgage bankers) and loan servicers, and the resulting loans secured by family homes
- Payday lenders that defer deposits of checks for a fee, and payday loan transactions
- Independent escrow companies, and escrow transactions
- Credit companies and individuals that agree to manage or settle consumer debt

## Enforcement

The Department of Corporations protects the public from fraud and violations of law committed by investment and financial businesses in California.

The Department can issue administrative orders; deny, censure, suspend, or revoke licenses of individuals and companies; and file civil actions against wrongdoers. The Department works with District Attorneys and law enforcement for criminal prosecution.

## Resources

### Consumer Resource Center

Call toll-free to ask about a potential investment, determine the license status of a licensee and whether there are disciplinary actions against them, and to file a complaint. Language translation services are available for non-English speakers. The toll-free number is:

**1-866-ASK-CORP (1-866-275-2677)**

### File a Complaint

Help us protect the public! If you suspect a licensee has violated the law or is involved in financial or investment fraud, please file a complaint. Call our Consumer Resource Center for a complaint form, or print one from our website at [www.corp.ca.gov](http://www.corp.ca.gov)

### Website

The Department's Website contains helpful information and tools. You can:

- Look up a particular financial services provider (such as a stock-broker or investment adviser) to see if that individual/business is properly licensed
- File certain documents on-line (such as Limited Offering Exemption Notices – LOENs) to sell investments and raise capital – useful for small businesses trying to raise capital
- Search the California Electronic Access to Securities Information (Cal-EASI) database for information about securities and franchise filings
- Look up Department of Corporations' enforcement actions, including civil actions and administrative orders
- Find links to partner agencies and investment-related resources
- Locate upcoming public events in your area on the Events Calender:

[www.corp.ca.gov/outreach/events/events.htm](http://www.corp.ca.gov/outreach/events/events.htm)

## Education and Outreach

The Department of Corporations is committed to protecting the public. Our programs and resources are designed to teach Californians to “investigate before you invest” and provide information and tools needed to stop financial and investment fraud before it happens.

### Programs:

**Seniors Against Investment Fraud (SAIF) Program** alerts and educates Californians over 50 about investment fraud, predatory lending, and how to avoid being scammed. SAIF utilizes a statewide network of trained senior volunteers from local Retired Senior Volunteer Programs (RSVPs) and other non-profit organizations.

**California Troops Against Predatory Scams (TAP\$)** alerts and educates California’s military servicemembers and their families about investment fraud, predatory lending, and how to avoid being scammed.

For more information on programs or to schedule a presentation, please call:  
**Toll-Free 1-866-ASK-CORP (1-866-275-2677)**

For additional copies of this publication, please e-mail your request to [forms@corp.ca.gov](mailto:forms@corp.ca.gov)

### Contact us if you:

- Want to verify that an individual or company is licensed by the Department
- Are considering making an investment or purchasing a franchise. It’s a good idea to check out the background of the person or company you plan to do business with
- Think you or your business may need to register and/or be licensed with the California Department of Corporations - our webpage can provide you with application forms and other important information

- Need the services of a finance lender, mortgage banker or escrow agent. We can tell you whether or not a person or company is licensed with the State
- Have a complaint about an individual or business regulated by the Department – we can provide you with a complaint form and help you file your complaint

Sacramento Office  
1515 K Street, Suite 200  
Sacramento, CA 95814

San Diego Office  
1350 Front St., Room 2034  
San Diego, CA 92101

Los Angeles Office  
320 West 4th Street,  
Suite 750  
Los Angeles, CA 90013

San Francisco Office  
71 Stevenson Street,  
Suite 2100  
San Francisco, CA 94105

### **California Department of Corporations**

Toll-Free 1-866-ASK-CORP (or 275-2677)

TTY 1-800-735-2922

Online [www.corp.ca.gov](http://www.corp.ca.gov)